

**PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING  
MINUTES – JUNE 15, 2021**

The meeting of the Towanda Borough Planning Commission was held on Tuesday, June 15, 2021 in the Council Room of the Towanda Municipal Building, 724 Main Street, Towanda, PA.

The meeting was called to order by Planning Commission member Mark Christini due to Chairman Lacek's absence at 7:05 PM.

**Members Present** Mark Christini, Kevin Doupe', Erin Groves, Jimmy Lacek, Kayla Saxon

**Members Absent** Jim Lacek-Chairman, Diane Siegmund

**Visitors** Shane Mize came to the meeting with Kevin Doupe' to observe the meeting. Shane told the board a little bit about himself, as he is an Air-Force Vet and stated that he and his wife moved back here about 3 years ago. He currently works for Schaedler-Yesco. Mr. Christini told him a little bit about what the Commission does (Such as the Comprehensive Plan & addressing new ordinances directed by Council).

**Minutes**

A motion was made by Mrs. Groves and seconded by Mr. Doupe' to approve the minutes of the April 20, 2021, Planning Commission Meeting. Motion passed.

**New Business**

Mr. Christini stated that Karen Johnson (Planning Commission Vice-President) resigned on May 19th, therefore, we now have 2 open slots behind Karen and behind Larry Kacyon. The process for someone who may be interested is to send a "letter of interest" to the Borough.

Tonight, the board received a letter from Diane Siegmund (who was called via conference call to elaborate) which was read by those present. Her letter was concerning a burning issue in the borough in which a neighbor talked to her about, but this neighbor was afraid to call the borough about it. A couple residents went to the home and told them that they were not allowed to burn and the people who lived there told them that it was perfectly alright for them to burn. Ms. Siegmund feels that when this happens maybe people should be able to contact Jeremy Sluyter (Code Officer). She feels that available town resources need to be known when this sort of thing happens.

Mr. Christini stated that the process is to call the police and they will deal with it. There are times when open burning is allowed, if you have a campfire that's less than 2 feet in diameter you can burn wood (it cannot be creating noxious smoke or odors), and if you have some sort of religious ceremony. If this unpleasant odor happens at night, then you would contact the police, and during the day it could be Jeremy Sluyter (during working hours). Chief Epler stated that people call often about burning. Ms. Siegmund stated that it needs to be clear as to who should be contacted. Mrs. Groves stated that we need to speak up when something like this happens and to call the borough or the police, which most people should know.

Communication to inform residents was further discussed and it may be a good idea to have a forum on the borough website. Mr. Christini stated that Manager Lane and he discussed a new website, but with him leaving it will have to wait a little longer. However, he will bring this to the attention of the borough council.

**Signage:**

The Planning Commission discussed signs and the packet of information that Diane Siegmund provided last month that showed some Towanda Borough empty storefronts and also some outdoor LED signage examples. Mr. Doupe' showed a picture of the town of Vestal, NY's new welcome sign that is an LED sign, but very nice and tasteful. Mr. Christini asked Mr. Doupe' to do some research on the signage ordinance that the town of Vestal has in place, as it is one of the nicest parts of the triple cities.

**Old Business**

Property Maintenance Ordinance – Continued/Ongoing

Mr. Christini talked about the Vacant Storefront Maintenance Registry of Arlington, Massachusetts and provided a copy of the following section:

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Section 4. Annual Registration Fee, Failure to Pay, Waiver.

C. Owners may apply for a waiver of the annual registration fee at the time of registration of a vacant property and upon receipt of annual registration fee invoices each year thereafter, requesting waiver of some or the entire fee on grounds of demonstrable financial hardship, or by agreeing in writing to display public art as defined herein for the term of a vacancy. Waivers for public art display will be granted only as sufficient public is available, appropriate to the location for display, and the Town, artist, owner agree to terms of exhibition as set forth by the Planning Department. Waivers requested on the basis of financial hardship are subject to a 30-day review period. If a waiver based on financial hardship is granted it will be reevaluated on a quarterly basis until property is leased or sold. If a waiver of the registration fee based on financial hardship is denied, the registration fee is due within 30 days of the decision.

**“Waiver of Annual Registration Fee” - Add the above to Section 7 of the Property Maintenance Ordinance:**

Jimmy Lacek made the motion to add the above to Section 7 of the Property Maintenance Ordinance draft, seconded by Kayla Saxon. Motion Passed. Kevin will add it to the draft for the next meeting.

**Changing the “scope” of the Property Maintenance Ordinance Section 3:**

Kayla Saxon made the motion to change the scope of Section 3 – to Commercial - C2 & C3 districts (and get rid of residential and industrial) structures and properties as a starting point, seconded by Jimmy Lacek. Motion passed. Kevin will add it to the draft for the next meeting.

Kevin Doupe' will make these changes to the proposed ordinance and also edit “residential parts” in Section 8, and send the **Google Link** to all of the Planning Commission members.

**FUTURE Business (at a Later Date)**

**Note: Mr. Christini will discuss the status with Manager Lane.**

**A. Update Regional Comprehensive Plan – Regional Comprehensive Plan 2007 links:**

This will have to wait until after the CENSUS is complete, Manager Lane to apply for DCED grant money.

[Central Bradford Comprehensive Plan Executive Summary](#)

[Central Bradford Region Comprehensive Plan](#)

[Central Bradford Region Comprehensive Plan Appendix](#)

**B. Manager Lane updated the Committee on the SCI Master Plan. He submitted for an update of that plan to the DCED for funding to hire a consultant to do it for us. He stated that he would like the Planning Commission to be the point Committee for part of the planning process if we receive the DCED grant.**

The following projects he identified for improvements will be bundled together:

1. Tommy Fairchild Memorial Park (formerly Riverfront Park)
2. YMCA (SCI) Complex Master Plan (including the Memorial Park playground)
3. Third Ward Park, the Pocket Park
4. The TRAIL project with the possibility of connecting all Towanda Borough Parks and municipal grounds with the trail.

This grant, if approved, will probably not happen until sometime in 2021 (depending on when it gets addressed by DCED).

**Adjournment:**

Motion to adjourn was made by Jimmy Lacek seconded by Erin Groves at 8:30 PM.

The next meeting will be held on Tuesday, July 20th at 7 PM.

*Diane M Kulick*

Recording Secretary  
Planning Commission